Nicolas Watkins

Cybersecurity Architect

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SUMMARY

Senior **Cybersecurity Architect** with eight years securing consumer finance, public-sector, and regulated enterprise environments, including more than six years shaping security architecture and governance. Leads NIST-aligned architecture design, solution reviews, risk mitigation, and control mapping across AWS, Azure, on-premises, and hybrid platforms. Partners with engineering, infrastructure, compliance, risk, and product teams throughout system development lifecycles, turning business needs into practical security blueprints and reusable patterns. Recent work covers IAM, **network security**, data protection, **application security**, DevSecOps, **infrastructure-as-code**, GenAI, LLMs, agentic AI, and MCP hardening. Communicates technical risk clearly through governance boards, executive briefings, decision records, and audit evidence. Ready to help HarborPoint Lending Group strengthen secure innovation, regulatory alignment, and trusted lending services.

EXPERIENCE

Senior Cybersecurity Architect

Pinecrest Consumer Finance January 2025 - Present Baltimore, MD

Directs security architecture for lending platforms across cloud, on-premises, and **hybrid environments**. Chairs solution reviews, guides governance, mentors architecture teams, and translates regulatory duties into secure blueprints.

- Converted lending objectives into NIST-aligned blueprints for cloud, **on-premises**, and hybrid platforms.
- Chaired application and API reviews, documenting control gaps, residual risk, and compensating controls.
- Established Zero Trust patterns using NIST SP 800-207, AWS, Azure, and workload segmentation.
- Created GenAI reviews covering agent permissions, data boundaries, logging, and **MCP hardening**.
- Mapped controls to NIST, **PCI DSS**, **ISO 27001**, and CMMC evidence requirements.
- Mentored five security engineers and two architects through **threat modeling** and DevSecOps reviews.

Senior Security Architect

Blue Ridge Bankcard Services September 2022 - December 2024 Tysons, VA

Owned architecture assessments for payment, account servicing, and data exchange initiatives across multi-cloud, private cloud, and legacy environments. Guided governance decisions, secure delivery, and audit preparation.

- Assessed payment and account platforms across **Azure**, AWS, private **cloud**, and data centers.
- Produced **reference architectures** for privileged access, secrets, encryption, APIs, and workload isolation.
- Led STRIDE reviews for applications and vendors, resolving high-priority design weaknesses.
- Embedded SAST, composition analysis, container scanning, and Terraform checks into delivery pipelines.
- Standardized **PCI DSS** and **ISO 27001** evidence through diagrams, data flows, and control mappings.
- Presented residual-risk recommendations to **governance** boards without weakening security requirements.

Security Architect

Northstar Public Benefits Systems May 2020 - August 2022 Richmond, VA

Designed **security patterns** for benefits administration and financial disbursement services under strict privacy, access, and availability requirements. Supported architecture governance, cloud reviews, compliance assessments, and engineering remediation.

- Designed **NIST**-aligned patterns for **IAM**, encryption, logging, segmentation, and secure interfaces.
- Reviewed **AWS** landing zones and Azure subscriptions for configuration and key-management risks.
- Created intake and decision records guiding projects through planning, testing, and release.
- Mapped safeguards to **NIST SP 800-53** and SP 800-171 for regulated assessments.
- Guided engineers through remediation involving excessive privileges, exposed storage, and insecure accounts.
- Preserved audit evidence that gave **compliance** teams clearer assessment support.

Security Engineer

CivicShield Technology Services May 2018 - April 2020 Alexandria, VA

Supported security engineering for federal and regulated commercial clients, combining architecture analysis, control validation, identity reviews, **network security**, threat modeling, and compliance evidence management.

- Analyzed client designs against **NIST CSF** and SP 800-53 control requirements.
- Built AWS and Azure IAM checklists covering privileged roles and multifactor authentication.
- Validated firewalls, private connectivity, segmentation, endpoint telemetry, and centralized logging.
- Performed **threat modeling** with developers, converting findings into prioritized remediation tickets.
- Supported **PCI DSS** and **CMMC** readiness through evidence collection and control matrices.
- Created architecture diagrams and executive issue summaries for consistent project reviews.

PROJECTS

GenAI Security Governance Program 2026

Established review guardrails for LLM and agentic AI pilots, covering MCP hardening, tool permissions, prompt data boundaries, threat modeling, monitoring, and approval decisions.

Zero Trust Architecture Reference Model 2024

Built reusable Zero Trust patterns across AWS, Azure, and hybrid services, connecting identity context, segmentation, workload authentication, and NIST SP 800-207 governance.

LEADERSHIP & AWARDS

- Cybersecurity Excellence Award, Blue Ridge Bankcard Services, 2024
- Architecture Governance Recognition, Northstar Public Benefits Systems, 2022
- George Mason University Cyber Defense Scholarship, 2017

EDUCATION

Bachelor's Degree in Cybersecurity

George Mason University GPA: 3.7 2018 Fairfax, VA

Coursework: *Network security, digital forensics, secure software development, risk management*

CERTIFICATIONS

- CISSP 2023
- AWS Certified Security - Specialty 2022
- Microsoft Certified: Azure Security Engineer Associate 2021

TECHNICAL SKILLS

- **NIST Frameworks:** NIST CSF, NIST SP 800-53, NIST SP 800-171
- **Zero Trust Standards:** NIST SP 800-207, Zero Trust Architecture, identity context
- **Cloud Platforms:** AWS, Microsoft Azure, private cloud
- **Identity Security:** IAM, multifactor authentication, privileged access
- **Network Security:** Firewalls, network segmentation, private connectivity
- **Data Protection:** Encryption, key management, data boundaries
- **Application Security:** API protection, SAST, software composition analysis
- **DevSecOps Tools:** Container scanning, Terraform checks, security gates
- **AI Security:** LLMs, GenAI, agentic AI
- **AI Governance:** MCP hardening, tool permissions, prompt boundaries
- **Compliance Frameworks:** PCI DSS, ISO 27001, CMMC
- **Threat Modeling:** STRIDE, data-flow analysis, attack-surface review
- **Security Governance:** Architecture review boards, decision records, control mapping

SKILLS

- NIST CSF
- NIST SP 800-53
- NIST SP 800-171
- Zero Trust
- AWS
- Azure
- IAM
- Network Security
- Data Protection
- Application Security
- GenAI Security
- Agentic AI
- MCP Hardening
- Threat Modeling
- DevSecOps

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- Mentor, Mid-Atlantic Cybersecurity Professionals Network, 2023 - Present
- Volunteer Reviewer, Maryland Cybersecurity Workforce Collaborative, 2021 - Present

LANGUAGES

- English (Native)
- Spanish (Intermediate)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Work Status : Authorized to work in United States. No sponsorship required.

REFERENCES

AVAILABLE ON REQUEST